



A barricade put up by revolutionaries across a street in Moscow, December 1905

Faced with all these problems, Nicholas had to give way. In October 1905 he issued a document called the **October Manifesto**. This said that Russia could have a **Duma**, an elected parliament, to help run the country. It also allowed the Russian people basic rights, such as the right to form political parties and the right of free speech.

The liberals were delighted with the October Manifesto, but the revolutionary parties did not trust Nicholas to keep his word. They were proved right in December when the police arrested the members of the St Petersburg Soviet and sent fifteen of them into exile in Siberia. In Moscow an army was sent to crush the Soviet and more than a thousand people died in street fighting between revolutionaries and soldiers.

In the early months of 1906 the Tsar crushed all

other areas of revolution. Worse, bands of thugs known as Black Hundreds decided to take the law into their own hands. They organised massacres of revolutionaries. In over 100 cities people who had joined in the revolution were put to death in public baths which the police and army did nothing to stop.

By March 1906 the revolution was over. But at least Russia had got a parliament out of it – the Duma. Elections for the Duma were held in March 1906 and a majority of anti-government candidates gained office. But when the Duma met for the first time in May, Nicholas issued a set of **Fundamental Laws**. The first one said 'To the Emperor of all the Russias belongs supreme autocratic power'. In other words, as far as Nicholas was concerned, nothing much had changed. Duma or no Duma, Russia was still an autocracy.

THE 1905 REVOLUTION

War against Japan

In 1904 Russia went to war with Japan. They were fighting for control of Korea and Manchuria in the Far East (see map on page 3). Tsar Nicholas was glad to go to war. He thought that a quick victory would make him popular and would stop people criticising his government.

Right from the start of the war the Russian army suffered one terrible defeat after another. To help the army Nicholas sent the Russian Baltic fleet on a seven month voyage half way round the world to Manchuria. But as soon as the Russian fleet arrived in Japanese waters the Japanese fleet destroyed all but three of the Russian ships in the battle of Tsushima.

Far from making Nicholas popular, the war with Japan weakened his position. The war also made conditions for working people worse than before: food supplies to the cities broke down and factories closed as raw materials ran short. Workers found themselves out of work and out on the streets.

Bloody Sunday

On Sunday 22 January, 1905, a crowd of 200,000 workers and their families marched through the streets of St Petersburg towards the Tsar's Winter Palace. Their aim was to present Nicholas with a petition asking for better working and living conditions, an end to the war with Japan, a shorter working day, and many other reforms. The marchers were led by **Father Gapon**, a priest who sympathised with poor workers.

When the marchers reached the centre of St Petersburg, soldiers and police tried to stop them. Scuffles broke out and then the soldiers opened fire, aiming low. Around 500 marchers were killed and thousands more were wounded.

This dreadful massacre quickly came to be known as **Bloody Sunday**. As news of the massacre spread through Russia, there were riots in the countryside and strikes in the towns. Hundreds of government officials were murdered. Tsar Nicholas's uncle, the Grand Duke Serge, was blown to pieces by a terrorist bomb. Bloody Sunday had started a revolution against the Tsar.

The 1905 revolution

In June 1905 the crew of the battleship *Potemkin*, pride of the Black Sea fleet, threw their officers overboard and took control of the ship. This was mutiny. Although the mutineers had no plan, and gave them-

selves up only a few weeks later, the mutiny was very threatening to Tsar Nicholas. It showed that he could not trust his armed forces.

Just as worrying for Nicholas was the behaviour of peasants in the countryside. In many areas peasants had rebelled, butchering their landlords and burning their farms. At the same time, many of the non-Russian peoples of the Empire, peoples such as the Georgians and the Poles, took the opportunity to declare their independence from Russian rule.

Then in September 1905 a general strike began. All over Russia factories, offices, shops, railways, hospitals and schools closed down. In many towns and cities the strikers set up councils called **Soviets** to run the towns during the strike. The Soviets quickly became an alternative form of government, for the striking workers were willing to obey the orders of the Soviets, even though they would not obey the Tsar's government.



THE CZAR OF ALL THE RUSSIAS.

A British cartoon which appeared in Punch magazine in February 1905. 'Czar' is an old-fashioned spelling of 'Tsar'